

Opportunities for Researchers

Fossils on Park Service land may only be collected with a National Park Service approved research permit. The NPS Paleontology Program helps park staff identify research projects that support park resource management goals and facilitates cooperative ventures between researchers and parks.



Permit Applications

Researchers interested in conducting projects in national parks can now apply for a research permit online at http://science.nature.nps.gov/servlet/Prmt_PubIndex

Student Internships

Internships may be available for pay, academic credit or on a volunteer basis. Please contact the Geologic Resources Division or individual parks to explore the possibility of participating in paleontology projects.

To Learn More

Visit the NPS Paleontology Program website at www2.nature.nps.gov/grd/geology/paleo/

Information about activities and projects related to paleontology in national parks can be found in our Paleontology Newsletter at www2.nature.nps.gov/grd/geology/paleo/news/newsletter.htm



NPS Paleontology Program
Geologic Resources Division
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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Geologic Resources Division

www2.nature.nps.gov/grd/geology/paleo/

Fossils are non-renewable and relatively rare resources with significant scientific and educational value. Fossils on Park Service land are managed and protected for the enjoyment of the American people. It is illegal to collect or remove fossils from any National Park Service unit without a valid research permit.

The following is a partial list of the National Park Service units that preserve and interpret the fossil record. For more information about parks that contain fossils go to www.nps.gov

Agate Fossil Beds
National Monument
Harrison, NE
308-668-2211

Badlands
National Park
Interior, SD
605-433-5361

Big Bend
National Park
Big Bend NP, TX
915-477-2251

Dinosaur
National Monument
Dinosaur, CO
970-374-3000

Florissant Fossil Beds
National Monument
Florissant, CO
719-748-3253

Fossil Butte
National Monument
Kemmerer, WY
307-877-4455

Guadalupe Mountains
National Park
Salt Flat, TX
915-828-3251

Hagerman Fossil Beds
National Monument
Hagerman, ID
208-837-4793

John Day Fossil Beds
National Monument
Kimberly, OR
541-987-2333

Petrified Forest
National Park
Petrified Forest, AZ
520-524-6228

NPS Paleontology Program



In 1916, Congress established the National Park Service to manage units of the National Park System "... to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

National Park Service Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. §1

The NPS Paleontology Program helps implement this mandate by providing technical and scientific expertise to aid parks in the management, study, curation, and interpretation of their fossil resources.

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What Do We Do?



Documenting a fossil locality at Badlands National Park, SD.

Inventory and Documentation

The Paleontology component of the Geologic Resources Division helps parks conduct paleontologic surveys to determine the scope, diversity, geologic context, stratigraphic range, and geographic distribution of their paleontologic resources. Paleontologists in parks document fossil resources in terms of their scientific significance such as geologic distribution, rarity, quality of preservation, distinctive morphologic features, and assemblages preserved in unique circumstances.



Parks use this information in deciding how best to manage and protect park fossils and in their interpretive and education programs. This documentation is critical for ensuring fossil resources are considered in park planning and operations.

On the front cover: Visitors to Badlands National Park learn about the park's fossils. On the back cover: Dinosaur tracks at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, UT.

Resource Monitoring

Once a park's fossils are inventoried, the park designs and implements a paleontologic resource-monitoring program (e.g., periodic evaluation, photo points, rates of erosion, potential for theft or vandalism). The NPS Paleontology Program provides training and technical support to parks to enhance monitoring efforts of these nonrenewable resources.



Excavating a dinosaur at Big Bend National Park, TX.

Education and Interpretation

The NPS Paleontology Program helps park staff develop high quality and scientifically accurate interpretive/educational programs. These programs help further the public's appreciation for and protection of fossils.

The Program also helps facilitate partnerships with outside researchers, professional organizations and universities.



Currently over 150 parks have identified fossil resources within their boundaries. These range from dinosaurs and mammoths to petrified trees, fossil shells and pollen.

Publication

The NPS Paleontology Program produces a series of paleontology publications (e.g., Paleontologic Research Volumes, Park Paleontology Newsletters, Park Paleontologic Surveys) that are available to the general public as well as parks and professionals. See our website for availability.



Preparing an extinct sabertooth cat at John Day Fossil Beds National Monument, OR.

Curation

The Program provides guidance and technical support to park curators in their management of paleontologic collections in parks (e.g., identification, preparation, cataloging, and storage).